HISTORIAN

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OF HANCOCK COUNTY

July 2011

Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi

COMING EVENTS AT LOBRANO HOUSE

The monthly luncheon meeting will be held on Thursday, July 21, 2011, at noon at the Kate Lobrano House. Guest speaker for the program will be Patty Furr, Executive Director of the Hancock County Library System. Reservations are required and may be made by calling 467-4090. Please call by noon on Wednesday, July 20, to make your reservation, to help us plan seating which is limited to forty-eight people, and to apprise us of the number for whom to prepare. The price of the lunch is \$10.00.

ANNUAL CEMETERY TOUR

Even though October is still three months away, it's not too early to begin thinking about and planning the Hancock County Historical Society Annual Cemetery Tour. It will be held on Halloween night, Monday, October 31, 2011, at Cedar Rest Cemetery on Second Street. We will need volunteers to help prepare the cemetery for the tour (mark the path, etc.), to portray citizens buried there, to act as guides, and to serve at the Lobrano House. To volunteer, please call the Society at 467-4090.



John L. Sullivan (1858 - 1918)looks quite dapper in his top hat and Edwardian frock coat. He doesn't appear to be the last of the "bare-knuckle" boxing champions that he was. After his bout with Paddy Ryan at Mississippi City in 1882, he proclaimed himself the heavyweight champion of America.

The Coming Fight

A Visit to Bay St. Louis, Sullivan's Training Ground

Prior to his boxing bout with Paddy Ryan at Mississippi City on February 7, 1882, John L. Sullivan spent time in Bay St. Louis with his trainer, Billy Madden, preparing for the fight. The following article, a reprint from the New York Herald, appeared in the January 17, 1882, edition of the St. Louis Daily Globe-Democrat. No author of the article was given.

A very rapid and pleasant run over the finest, beyond all compare, of our Southern railroads-the Louisville and Nashville-brought your correspondent from New Orleans to Bay St. Louis. The object of the writer's visit to this most charming resort on the Mexican Gulf shore was for the purpose of interviewing John L. Sullivan, the celebrated Boston pugilist, and his trainer, Billy Madden, who were here located, who, in fact, have been here some time preparing for the coming prize fight. The train reached the Bay at 7:15 P. M.,

THE

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OF HANCOCK COUNTY

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P. O. Box 3356 Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi 39521

PHYSICAL ADDRESS:

108 Cue Street

Telephone/Fax

[228] 467-4090

Email address:

hancockcountyhis@bellsouth.net

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LOBRANO HOUSE HOURS

MONDAY — FRIDAY 10:00AM — 3:00PM Closed: 12:00—1:00 (lunch)

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making the run in two hours and fifteen minutes.

On asking the exact whereabouts of Sullivan and Madden, the answer came that they were probably at their quarters immediately fronting the bay. It was further stated that they had been at the hotel when the early evening train came in, and it was very probable that they would come back later. The above information proved correct, for in a few minutes in came Sullivan and Madden. Both men had evidently seen hard work since your correspondent had last laid eyes upon them. Sullivan, to be sure, had the same yellowish brown suit he sported when located in New Orleans, but instead of a neat shirt of spotless white, he carried a flannel undershirt which answered the purposes of an outside one, and this was laced up about the neck with a blue cord and tassel. But the neat, jaunty mustache which both men had sported when seen last in the Crescent City, had utterly disappeared. Both of their faces were closely shaved. In fact, both presented the appearance of game cocks of the shawl-neck breed prepared for battle, with all the glory of their beauty gone.

Cordial greetings were exchanged and an especial inquiry addressed to Sullivan elicited the information that he was in tip-top condition and weighed 128 pounds, stripped, yesterday.

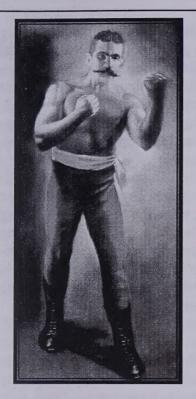
The next question that followed was addressed to Madden: "What do you think of the Bay as a training place?"

"I will tell you; I think it is just as nice as it can be; indeed, I do not believe anything much better could be found anywhere. We have a splendid shell road to walk on, and we enjoy all the quiet that could be desired. We have been here two weeks, and the first visitors we have had made their appearance today. These were Bob Farrell and Pete McCoy. The representatives of the New Orleans Times-Democrat were the next that honored us, and those, I can assure you, comprise the entire list since we have been settled in these parts."

The information was now given that they had determined to change their quarters and locate themselves in the Depot Hotel. The house they were then occupying had been kindly placed at their service by Dr. Latham, to be sure, but the cooking there was not suited to a man under training and hence the necessity which compelled a change to the hotel.

A visit was proposed to their present quarters. A few minutes walk brought the party to the Latham cottage. The road which leads to it at one time wound through a perfect wilderness of magnificent white oaks, and at another skirted along the shores of the bay where the faintest murmur of the waves gave a dreary appearance to the scene.

The little white cottage which glimmered in the darkness stood on a bluff overlooking the blue waters of the Mississippi Sound. Here had been up to the present time Sullivan and Mad-



John L. Sullivan Ready for the fight

den's quarters. A bed stood near the door beside the front window. This, a large round table, a rocker, three chairs—not enough for the small company then present—completed the furniture of the room. At the time the company entered it, it should be confessed, it did look a little in disorder; then it should be remembered its late occupants were now on the move. A tub and a bucket for bathing purposes stood at the foot of the bed. A ball of leather was suspended from the ceiling; two or three sand bags were lying on the floor. On the table were newspapers, writing paper, and a bottle of ink. The last gave things about the room quite a literary air albeit Billy Madden disclaimed the honor of being considered literary, saying he had not yet climbed to the high, distinction of being even private secretary to his principal, desiring to be addressed simply as trainer. The arrangements of the move were soon made, and in a very short while the whole company were on the way back to the hotel, along a beautiful road, over which thick branches of the white oak hung. Here was a fine opportunity to ask questions, and the opportunity, of contrast, was improved.

"Have you any fears now, Mr. Madden, in regard to the fight not taking place?" was the question put to the trainer.

"None in the least now. I know my man would fight, but I must confess that I was once not so sure about Ryan. Not that I believe he will shirk the fight, because I am very sure he is game; only I was afraid others would place difficulties in his way that not all his bravery could overcome. But since I talked matters over with Ryan in New Orleans, only a few days ago, I have changed my opinion considerably about the whole business. Now I know there will be a fight, and I do not believe anything can prevent it."

"Then you saw Ryan when in New Orleans. Were the preliminaries of the fight arranged then?"

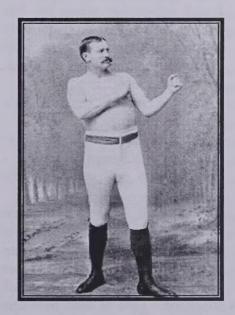
"No, only some minor matters, but I am very sure there will be no difficulty about any of the minor points yet to be discussed. I must say I was very pleasantly greeted, and I feel certain that everything will be done on the square. I will bet now any amount of money that there will be a fight, sure."

"Did Sullivan see Ryan, when he passed through here on Monday?"

"Yes, Ryan was looking out of a window of one of the coaches when he saw Sullivan and he at once called out to him and asked how he was getting on. 'First rate,' replied Sullivan, and he went forward and gave Ryan his hand. They then chatted together very pleasantly until the train started, when Sullivan said, 'Good-by, Paddy, I will see you later.' Ryan at once said, 'I'll be on hand, sure.'"

"What did you think, Madden, of Ryan's condition as it appeared to you?"

"Well, to answer this question exactly, I think he is carrying too much flesh, and I do not believe he can train it off in this climate without serious injury. Ryan must now have twelve pounds more of superfluous flesh on him than he should have, and with that he is not fit to fight Sullivan."



Patrick "Paddy" Ryan 1851—1900

"Do you still entertain the same high opinion of your principal that you did when in New Orleans?"

"Yes, sir, I do; and still hold him to be the best fighting man in the world, without any exception whatsoever. A good deal has been said about certain special points that are claimed for Ryan; and yet I am very sure people will be astonished when they see Sullivan stripped in the ring. The most stubborn now will change their opinions then. They will learn then that Sullivan can hit hard and quick, and can stand up quite as long in the scratch as Ryan; and you may depend on it he is something of a wrestler, too. Just wait and you will see."

"How long do you think that the battle will last?"

"Not longer than thirty minutes. Both men mean business, and there will be no time lost in sparring. Now one of the men must be whipped in that time if regular business is carried out, and I still believe my man will be found uppermost when the last call is made. If Sullivan only fights as well as he looks, he will do, but I think he fights even better than he looks."

"Who will be Sullivan's second in the ring?"

"Joe Goss will be, certainly. So it has been decided."

"Who will you select for referee?"

"Well, I have half a dozen in my head to make a selection from, any one of which I am sure would do well by us. I do not want anyone that is not above all suspicion. Lots of such men can be found in New Orleans that would exactly fill the bill, and out of them I expect to make my choice."

"What is your mode of training, Mr. Madden, as now pursued, in getting Sullivan ready for the coming contest?"

"Here it is exactly as I have written it down. Sullivan gets up at 7 o'clock. washing his face and brushing and washing his teeth, he rinses his mouth and takes one or two swallows of pure spring water. He then removes his night clothing, sponges his body with sea water, and is well rubbed, perfectly dry, with coarse towels. After dressing he takes a gentle walk of one mile before breakfast. Breakfast consists of beefsteak or mutton chops cooked to suit the taste, with coarse bread and butter and a cup of weak tea.

Half an hour after breakfast he dresses so as to be comfortable. He then starts out for a good brisk walk, which varies from eight to ten miles. As he nears home—say within one or two miles— he increases his speed so as to get up a perspiration.

After the walk he goes directly to his room and is well rubbed down with coarse towels. When cool enough he is sponged off with sea water and another good rubbing down with coarse towels follows. He then dresses and remains quiet until he is called to dinner, which meal is fixed at 1 o'clock P. M.

His bill of fare at dinner is limited to roast beef or roast mutton or boiled mutton or beef-steak. Plenty of stale bread may be allowed and butter, also nice

tender celery if desired and one or two potatoes. As a rule, however, Sullivan informed the *Herald* correspondent that he had little or no fancy for vegetables of any kind, and generally finished off his dinner with a couple of cups of weak tea.

An hour after dinner Sullivan takes any kind of exercise that suits him best, such as hitting a football suspended from the ceiling, the use of dumbbells, Indian clubs, short sprint races, sparring—in fact, any of the above.

Supper is served at 6 P. M. This consists of cold roast beef or mutton chops, with stale bread and butter, plain apple sauce and weak tea. Once in a while the meal is varied with Irish or Scotch oatmeal, well cooked with milk, if it happens to agree with his stomach.

After supper Sullivan takes a moderate walk of about half an hour. He retires to bed about 9:30. In going to bed he always takes off all of his clothes worn during the day—every single garment, particularly those worn next to the skin. His sleeping room is always kept well ventilated, with the windows a little down at the top. His bed covering is always put well over him, so he is kept comfortable and nothing more.

During training all hot baths or bed sweats must be carefully avoided, as they are debilitating in the extreme. The perspiration that may be induced in ordinary exercises is all that is required and nothing more.

Occasionally a pleasant sour apple or an orange may be taken in the evening, in order to robacco, in fact all stimulants, are carefully avoided, with the single exception of a glass of ale at dinner, but even this must not be touched except when necessity requires it. Only a moderate quantity of salt in meats is allowed. Just enough water is permitted to quench the thirst. At the same time every care must be taken that he does not suffer for the want of it. Plenty of time is given for eating his meals and the stomach must not be overloaded.

His training will be completed in about five weeks, which is amply long enough for that business, in my opinion. I am always particular that Sullivan is never overworked, for that brings on exhaustion, which is hurtful; not to say dangerous. I shall stop work three days before the fight, and then all the exercise required is moderate walking, with plenty of rubbing down, both with hands and towels."

The colors of Sullivan are a white silk handkerchief, with green border, and American and Irish flags in each corner—eight flags in all—an eagle in the center, and under that the motto, "May the best man win."

Sullivan to the question, "What do you think of the condition of Ryan?" replied, "I think it first-rate." And "Who do you think will win?" "Well that is a hard question; only I shall do my best to accomplish it."

[Editor's note: I found further information about the fight quite interesting. Jack Anderson, ho lectures in law at the University of Limerick (Ireland) and is a native of Doon in County Limerick wrote a biography of Sullivan.

His remarks about the fight are intriguing. The fight was somewhat disappointing and lasted roughly ten minutes with Sullivan easily defeating Ryan in nine rounds, as governed by the London Prize Ring Rules. In fact, the most interesting thing about the fight was the audience, in which the James brothers. Frank and Jesse, were spotted. The captivating question arises, "Were Frank and Jesse James really in Mississippi City for this fight?)

SOURCES:

Anderson, Jack. "John L. Sullivan."

**Boxing Biographies, 20 May 2011 http://boxingbiographies.com/bio/index.php?otion=com_content&task=view&id-40.

Belfiore, Michael. John L. Sullivan Biog raphy—The First Boxing Celebrity, End of an Era, Chronology, Last of the Bareknuckle Champions. 20 May 2011 http://sports.jrank.org/pages/4699/Sullivan-John-L.html.

"Coming Fight, The" St. Louis Daily Globe-Democrat, 17 January 1882, p. 11.

Did You Know This about Hancock County

By Scott Bagley

Did you know that while the City of Bay St. Louis celebrated one hundred years of incorporation in 1958, the town was actually forty years older at the time of the celebration?

In 1958 the Bay Saint Louis Centennial Corporation presented wonderful festivities in honor of the much publicized one hundredth anniversary of the incorporation of the town which



Thomas Shields 1783—1827 Landowner for whom Shieldsboro was named

now calls itself Bay Saint Louis. There were costumes and parades, and an historically important book was published to mark the occasion. In fact, however, the town of Shieldsboro (which later became Bay Saint Louis) was incorporated by the very first legislature of the State of Mississippi in a bill signed by Governor Holmes on January 21, 1818. The pertinent language read as follows:

Be it enacted by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the State of Mississippi in General Assembly convened, that the place located on the West Side of the Bay of St. Louis in the county of Hancock, known by the name of Shieldsboro, is hereby declared to be a town, under the name of Shieldsboro; and it shall be the duty of the owners thereof to deposit in the clerk's office of the county aforesaid, within six months after the passage of this act, a plat of said town....

So why was there a celebration in 1958? Apparently somebody remembered that 1958 was the one hundredth anniversary of the re-incorporation of Shieldsboro, and the city fathers decided that was as good a reason as any to hold a celebration. A reincorporation was deemed necessary in 1858 because of the "controversy" that brewed for many years over the name of the town. Despite its official adoption by the state legislature in 1818, Shieldsboro, named after early pioneer Thomas Shields, did not meet everyone's approval. It was especially unpopular with those of French descent. It had always been "the Baie" to them, short for Bay Saint Louis. Legend has it that the stubborn ones absolutely refused to use the name Shieldsboro. They signed all their mail and documents as originating in Bay Saint Louis. In an attempt to put this matter to rest, on January 4, 1858, Mayor P. C. Monet and his board of aldermen officially reincorporated the town under the name of Shieldsboro.



This Magnolia Marker commemorating the former name of Bay St. Louis stands on South Second Street in Bay St. Louis in front of the "shoo fly" next to the old city hall. Of course the 1858 reincorporation was followed by yet another re-incorporation on March 2, 1875, wherein the city fathers changed the town's name to Bay Saint Louis, and so it has been ever since.

It would seem then that many residents who were alive and kicking for the city's one hundredth birthday in 1958 will also be able to celebrate the city's two hundredth birthday in 2018!

[The author wishes to thank Mr. Harry Ward of Hattiesburg, MS, who reminded the Historical Society of the interesting "confusion" surrounding the actual age of Hancock County's city on the Bay of St. Louis. For the initiative, Mr. Ward will be the author's guest at a future Historical Society luncheon.]

ADDITIONAL SOURCES:

First 300 Years, Bay St. Louis, Mississippi, The. Bay St. Louis, MS: Hancock County Historical Society, 1998.

Scharff, Robert G. Louisiana's Loss, Mississippi's Gain. Lawrenceville, VA: Brunswick Publishing Corp., 1999.

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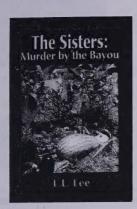
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